

Today's News - Friday, June 24, 2011

- Weinstein gives a shout-out to new Leers Weinzapfel monograph and how well it illustrates the firm's talents at being "lovers of the difficult."
- We lost George M. White, the "influential and long-serving" Architect of the Capitol who "introduced a new professionalism and understanding of architectural and urban history."
- Brussat is "thrilled" China wants to copy the picturesque Austrian village of Hallstatt that "is sure to outshine China's mostly prefab new towns in beauty" (and he's not holding his breath for "news of a first successful reproduction of an existing modernist city or town or just a modernist street. Faux Brasilia, anyone?").
- Birnbaum and Saffron tackle the recent assaults on historic preservation and the revisionists (Koolhaas, Glaeser, etc.) who assert that "the darn preservationists won't let American cities behave like Shenzhen."
- Saffron also gives a thumbs-up to a "well-crafted concrete addition" that "nods affectionately" to the 1919 concrete castle that is the Mercer Museum "while standing smartly on its own as architecture" instead of going "the glass-box route" of deferring to "the overpowering weight of the mother ship."
- Kamin cheers Ronan's "splendid new" Poetry Foundation building in Chicago and its "subtle, slowly unfolding pleasures" that are "mysterious, engaging, richly layered and revealing."
- Smith and Gill tapped to design the world's 4th tallest building (in China, where else?).
- LaBarre on Calgary's "bid for big-time culture" with Cloepfil's National Music Center that he says is "a building type that doesn't exist yet" and that the city hopes will be "an anchor for larger urban renewal" (great fly-through video, too!).
- Glancey strolls Jencks's "Life Mounds" ("totally cosmic" land sculptures outside Edinburgh) with the designer himself (great slide show).
- Schumacher cheers the Marcus Prize going to Kéré.
- Weekend diversions:
- Lange is swept away by "Designing Tomorrow: America's World's Fairs of the 1930s" at the National Building Museum.
- Reel time: "Battle for Brooklyn" is a "David-and-Goliath portrait" that can be compelling, but also "avoids some gray areas" - though it does bear "witness to the palpable insincerity and cold-blooded indifference of the developer-government alliance" behind the (galling to many) Atlantic Yards mega-project.
- Hawthorne goes to the movies: "Midnight in Paris" and "The Tree of Life" are, "beneath the surface, channeling Jane Jacobs" and "requiems for throwback, Restoration Hardware urbanism."
- The makers of "Unfinished Spaces" write about meeting the architects behind Cuba's National Art Schools and the opportunity to restore their utopia.
- Russell, this time on the "A" side in a Q&A about his new book, "The Agile City" and why and how the smart money is investing in green.
- King on the "A" side in a Q&A with Pedersen about his new book, "Cityscape: San Francisco and Its Buildings" and how he made his selection of 50 projects: "I'm a style agnostic...Just give me something that radiates conviction."
- A fascinating excerpt from "Marion Mahony Reconsidered": Friedman's essay on the woman architect who was truly "a force of nature."
- "Architect for Art - Max Gordon" is a "lively mix of anecdotes and insights that gives a rare glimpse inside the art world of this extraordinary

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Book Review: A Shout Out for Leers Weinzapfel Associates - Some Meditations on Rejuvenating Campus Architecture: "Lovers of the Difficult" was one of many compellingly memorable phrases by the great poet Rainer Maria Rilke, and it's a phrase that comes readily to mind when perusing the new retrospective monograph, "Made to Measure" ... By Norman Weinstein - ArchNewsNow

Obituary: George M. White, 90, influential and long-serving architect of the Capitol: ...[for] almost 25 years...he had to balance the conflicting demands of preservation, expansion and modernization...made subtle innovations that affected how the Capitol is seen and used...introduced a new professionalism and understanding of architectural and urban history. - Washington Post

China's faux Hallstatt? The outrage! ...a UNESCO World Heritage Site...Officials say that copying the village from photos is okay...cannot measure its buildings without owner permission...So the U.N. may be gathering its lawyers, but I am thrilled...is sure to outshine China's mostly prefab new towns in beauty. I await news of a first successful reproduction...of an existing modernist city or town or just a modernist street. Faux Brasilia, anyone? How about Houston on the Yangtze? Don't hold your breath. By David Brussat - Providence Journal (Rhode Island)

Nostalgia 2.0: Has Historic Preservation Become a Spectator Sport? ...is getting beaten up on all sides...this pile on is unprecedented, and more troubling, people seem to be content to sit on the sidelines and watch the slaughter...The New Museum's Cronacaos press release speaks of the growing "empire" of preservation. If historic preservation is an "empire" then maybe it's time for the empire to strike back. The modern historic preservation movement needs to take action... By Charles A. Birnbaum/The Cultural Landscape Foundation -- National Trust for Historic Preservation; Rem Koolhaas; Nicolai Ouroussoff; Sarah Williams Goldhagen - Huffington Post

History vs. high-rises: An urban debate: ...Edmund Bacon demonstrated that historic preservation could be a powerful economic-development tool...That narrative is now being challenged...Rather than helping our cities recover their bearings, historic preservation is strangling them, the revisionists assert...The problem is the darn preservationists won't let American cities behave like Shenzhen. By Inga Saffron -- Rem Koolhaas; Edward Glaeser; Robert Bruegmann - Philadelphia Inquirer

Mercer Museum adds space with a well-crafted concrete addition: ...a sophisticated, modern addition that nods affectionately to Mercer's [1919] building, while standing smartly on its own as architecture...Many architects might have gone the glass-box route...a way of deferring to, and resisting, the overpowering weight of the mother ship... By Inga Saffron -- Voith & Mactavish; Bohlin Cywinski Jackson [slide show] - Philadelphia Inquirer

Much more than a one-liner: The subtle, slowly unfolding pleasures of John Ronan's new Poetry Foundation building: The splendid new building that opens Saturday in Chicago does not lack for ambition, architectural or otherwise...It is, by turns, mysterious, engaging, richly layered and revealing. By Blair Kamin [images] - Chicago Tribune

Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill Architecture win competition for supertall tower in China: ...Wuhan Greenland Center the world's fourth tallest building...But it is, of course, much easier to announce a supertall than to build one, as the long list of vanquished supertall designs, such as the Chicago Spire, attests. By Blair Kamin [image] - Chicago Tribune

Brad Cloepfil On Calgary's National Music Center, A Bid For Big-Time Culture: ...designed as a 135,000-square-foot repository for the city's cultural aspirations...an anchor for larger urban renewal... "It's an exciting thing but it's a daunting thing. It's a building type that doesn't exist yet." By Suzanne LaBarre -- Allied Works Architecture [images, fly-through video] - Fast Company

Totally cosmic: The Life Mounds of Charles Jencks: His swirling 'land sculptures' [outside Edinburgh] are inspired by molecular biology and outer space...tells Jonathan Glancey about his most ambitious project

yet...has begun to tire of the intellectual thinness of much contemporary "iconic" architecture, and to look for something beyond its ephemeral nature. [slide show]- Guardian (UK)

Marcus Prize winner announced: ...awards a \$100,000 prize to an "emerging talent"...Next to the Pritzker Prize, perhaps the field's most prestigious, it is the most lucrative architectural award there is. By Mary Louise Schumacher -- Diébédo Francis Kéré/Kéré Architecture- Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Let's Go! World's Fairs of the 1930s: Did you know there was a World's Fair in Cleveland in 1936? Neither did I... "Designing Tomorrow: America's World's Fairs of the 1930s" at the National Building Museum that closes July 10 rights that wrong... By Alexandra Lange -- Alvar Aalto; Norman Bel Geddes; Albert Kahn [images, links]- Design Observer

The Epic Battle Over Atlantic Yards: The David-and-Goliath portrait can be compelling, but "Battle for Brooklyn" avoids some gray areas, and sometimes Goldstein's personal story displaces needed context...the camera's witness to the palpable insincerity and cold-blooded indifference of the developer-government alliance. - Dissent Magazine

Woody Allen, Terrence Malick engage in architectural nostalgia: Both 'Midnight in Paris' and 'The Tree of Life' have their ideals written on the walls. But is their pining justified? Deep beneath the surface, these movies are channeling Jane Jacobs...In an age of huge, out-of-control megacities...each picture is a requiem for throwback, Restoration Hardware urbanism. By Christopher Hawthorne- Los Angeles Times

Finishing "Unfinished Spaces": ...is as much about nature and human nature as it is about architecture...visits Cuba's National Art Schools...lies in ruins now...documentarians write about meeting the architects behind the project and the opportunity to restore their utopia. By Alysa Nahmias and Benjamin Murray -- Roberto Gottardi; Ricardo Porro; Vittorio Garatti- Moving Pictures Magazine

Agile Architecture Means Happier People, Fewer Cars: Visiting a yoga retreat, James S. Russell...approvingly contemplates the natural sewage filtration system. It's a typically engaging moment... "The Agile City: Building Well-being and Wealth in an Era of Climate Change"...examples of smart money investing in green... "The greatest cities have always been agile as they adapted to change." [images]- Bloomberg News

Q&A: John King re: "Cityscape: San Francisco and Its Buildings": a nifty little hybrid: one part prose poem to the built environment, one part a walking tour of the city..."I'm a style agnostic...Just give me something that radiates conviction...where you sense that the architect and/or client genuinely cared about the final result. These traits should be commonplace, but anyone who spends time in today's America knows better." By Martin C. Pedersen- Metropolis Magazine

Girl Talk: Marion Mahony Griffin, Frank Lloyd Wright and the Oak Park Studio: When we first hear [her] distinctive, passionate voice as it rises up from the pages of "The Magic of America," the memoir and manifesto she compiled during the 1940s, we know immediately that we are in the presence of a force of nature... By Alice T. Friedman -- Walter Burley Griffin [images; from "Marion Mahony Reconsidered"]- Places Journal

Book: "Architect for Art - Max Gordon": ...his legacy lies not just in the spaces he created...with its lively mix of anecdotes and insights...gives a rare glimpse inside the art world of this extraordinary period, as well as being a fitting tribute to one of its catalysts. [slide show]- Wallpaper*

Poetry as Rescuing Angel: The Angel Island Immigration Station, San Francisco Bay: Long abandoned and near demolition, an important part of American immigration history was saved by writings on the wall. -- Architectural Resources Group; Tom Eliot Fisch; Daniel Quan Design- ArchNewsNow

-- Kengo Kuma & Associates: V&A at Dundee, Scotland, UK
-- Book: "Architect for Art: Max Gordon" by David Gordon, Nicholas Serota, Kenneth Frampton and Jonathan Marvel

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